

# INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR-P. H. RAY EXPEDITION

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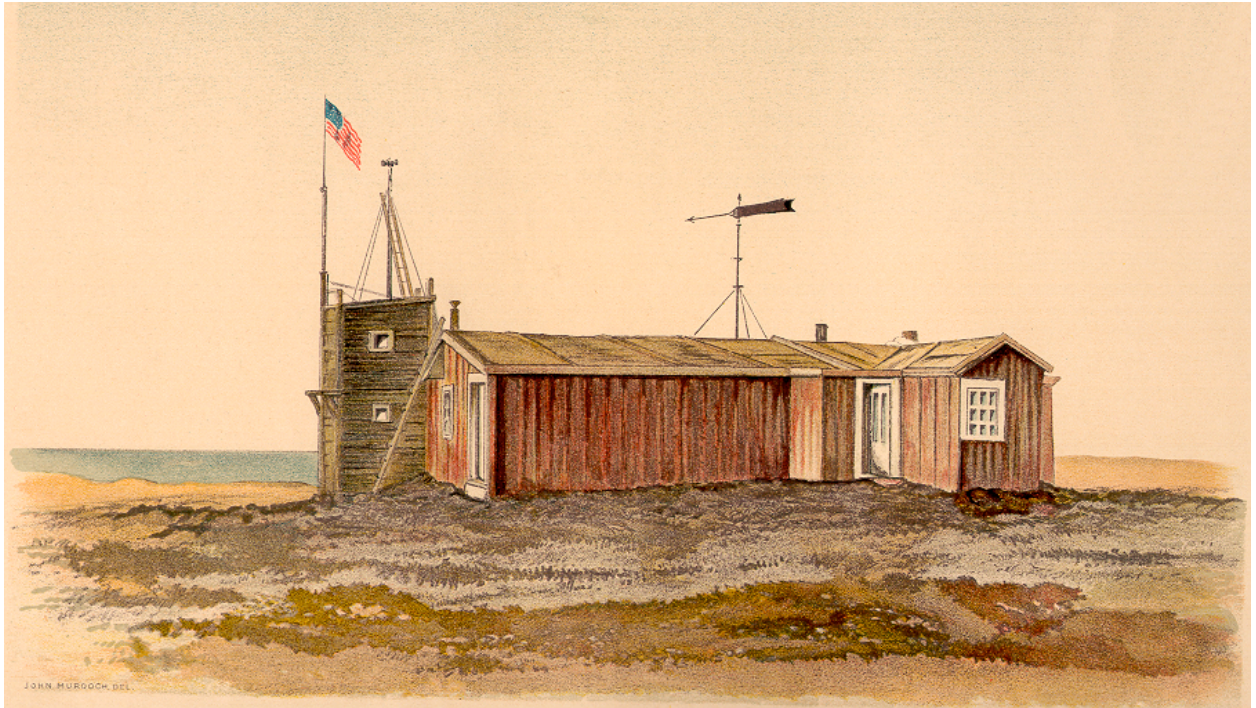
## The International Polar Year: Lt. P. H. Ray Expedition

Exploration of the Arctic advanced significantly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The search for the missing crews of the Erebus and Terror encouraged several nations to pursue voyages of discovery. The discoveries of the Franz Josef archipelago extending to latitude 80° N by the Austrian expedition of Payer and Weyprecht gave birth to the idea of a world-wide series of scientific observations in the recently discovered arctic regions.

International conferences in 1879 and 1880 supported by German Chancellor Bismarck led to the establishment of an international polar year which included Antarctica, with eleven nation participation. Although the United states was not represented at the conference it did establish two stations. One station was established at Barrow, Alaska ( 71.3° N ) by Lieutenant P. H. Ray, U. S. Army, ( 1881-1883) and the other in the north Greenland area under the command of Lieutenant Adolphus Greely.

Lt. Ray's primary mission leader of the International Polar Expedition to Point barrow during the years 1881-83 encompassed observations in meteorology, magnetism,

aurora, earth currents, tides, natural history and ethnographical studies of the Natives of Point Barrow. Geographical exploration was carried out during this expedition with a strong rapport developed with the Native population. This expedition demonstrated that arctic exploration and acquisition of important scientific knowledge could be acquired safely. Lt. Ray's expedition covered only three years. The expedition quarters located on the shore of the Chukchi Sea are still in use by a Barrow resident. Lt. Ray's legacy was reborn again in the establishment of an Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL) in 1947 by the U. S. Navy, Office of Naval Research. It was established in some surplus Quonset huts located within a Navy construction camp 6 kilometers on the coast northeast of Barrow. The laboratory continued to expand and benefited greatly by activities of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) and the International Biological Programme/Tundra Biome (IBP). Opportunities for research and research support continues to the present. The Navy transferred title to the NARL to the community in 1989 and the laboratory now operates under the name UIC/NARL. Scientific research support is provided at the UIC/NARL by the Barrow Arctic Science Consortium (BASC: <http://www.arcus.org/basc>, email: [basc@nuvuk.net](mailto:basc@nuvuk.net)).



The U.S. Army International Polar Expedition team built this structure in 1881 at Barrow, Alaska. All materials were brought in by ship. The structure contained living and dining quarters, laboratory and shop and a small office. The structure has had several functions since being abandoned when the expedition left Barrow. It is still in excellent condition.

Original caption: "Front View of Main Building United States Signal Station, Point Barrow, Alaska."

Reference information: Ray, P. H. Report of the International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska. Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1885.



The present UIC/NARL started from a small Quonset hut by a team of biologists with Office of Naval Research support in 1947. Science projects are currently supported at the UIC/NARL facility by the Barrow Arctic Science Consortium (BASC).